Castro Denounces Carter, Calls Troop Charge False

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HAVANA, Sept. 28 (UPI) — Cuban President Fidel Castro today rejected charges that Soviet combat troops are stationed in Cuba and angrily accused President Carter of creating the crisis and of being "dishonest, insincere and immoral."

In an extraordinary news conference in the presidential palace, Castro answered questions from eight American reporters who were permitted to fly to Havana to question the Cuban leader.

Castro said there are Soviet troops at a base that he identified for the first time as "training center number 12" near Havana.

The troops, he said, have been there for 17 years—since just after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

He accused Carter of "creating an artificial crisis, micro-missile crisis."

"The essential question is, why it is now a problem?" Castro said. "Why are they [the Americans] trying to create a crisis now?"

He said there has been no change in the function or approximate number of the troops, but he rejected one American reporter's suggestion that U.S. journalists be permitted to inspect the camp.

Castro returned frequently to Carter's motives.

"The fact that Carter is in a crisis is no excuse," Castro said. "It is dishonest, insincere, immoral. He has been deceiving world opinion by making believe that the Soviet Union and Cuba have taken a new step and that we changed the status quo."

In Washington, sources said President Carter will make a nationally televised speech Monday night to explain the controversy about the Soviet troops in Cuba.

Secretary of State Cyrus Vance canceled his planned trip to Panama this weekend for ceremonies on the Panama Canal treaties, although Vance said there was not "a crisis."

The sources said Carter's speech may include a display of top secret intelligence photographs and other data to support the U.S. position that combat troops are in Cuba.

White House attention to the situation escalated after talks between Vance and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko broke off Thursday night with "inconclusive" results.

Castro, dressed in his customary tailored olive fatigues, puffed continually on small cigars as he returned

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again and again to the charge that it was President Carter, led by his adviser, Zbigniew Brezezinski, who created the crisis.

Asked if he would meet President Carter face-to-face to discuss the problem, Castro said, "I would not propose it because I have an elemental feeling of dignity."

He accused the United States, through five presidential administrations, of creating "tense hostility and blockages against Cuba."

"The United States occupies a piece of our territory at Guantanamo with troops and ships," he said.

He said he surmised that Carter "had created the crisis" in the first place to disrupt the recent summit of nonaligned countries that met in Havana. Than, he said. "They didn't think that this would boomerang and threaten SALT and create a political disaster."

"Or maybe they thought that because SALT is so important they could impose humiliation on the Soviet Union and Cuba with kind of a micro-crisis of October," he said.

Castro was asked about his opinion — stated in 1977 — that Carter was an honest man of Christian beliefs. He said, "After that was expressed there was a crisis over our Mig-23, then over one submarine we had, then the Shaba (Zaire) crisis. This has been repeated and now it was done on the eve of the (nonaligned) summit."

"He has not been honest with the world," he said. "He is not dumb. He is not an idiot. He shouldn't play with world peace."

Castro conducted the news conference in Spanish through a translator. But as it finished and reporters gathered around him, he spoke a few sentences in English.

He said in English, "It is a most strange crisis because there is no basis for it." He added, "I have told you the truth and only the truth."

On another subject, Castro said Cuba has released 3,000 political prisoners to date, and "we will soon release hundreds more."

He said the release of political prisoners would have been faster "if the United States had not been so restrictive in granting visas to those who were released."

He said his former colleague in arms, Huber Montos, will soon finish his 20-year prison term and "we will fulfill the law."

Montos is scheduled to complete his prison term in October.